

Anti-Olympics Alliance Protests Racism & Repression in Sydney 2000

by
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The Anti-Olympics Alliance is a newly formed activist group made of community, student and progressive forces, such as Rent-watchers, the Indigenous Student Network, Justice Action and many others. The Alliance works in conjunction and solidarity with Indigenous groups and organizations, such as the Metropolitan Land Council and is active in organizing protests (for more details see below) and events to highlight the negative impact of the Olympic Games, as well as racism and social injustice in Sydney and Australia.

Some of the issues the Alliance is seeking to highlight are:

For the Redfern Koori Community, the Olympics means forced relocation.

Indigenous Australians are still the most socially and economically disadvantaged section of the Australian community, with Indigenous adults dying 20 years younger than other Australians, and a child mortality rate 3 times higher than non-Indigenous children.

While the New South Wales (N. S. W.) government has spent over \$2 and half billion on the Olympics, there has been massive cuts to public hospital,

Opening Ceremony Protest in Support of Indigenous Rights

The primary focus of the Alliance is to organize for the demonstration which will take place on the opening day of the 2000 Olympics - Friday, September 15, 2000, in support of Indigenous rights and social justice issues affecting all Australians.

The Alliance invites all interested parties — community groups, unions, social justice and progressive organizations, churches and student organizations — to get involved, either by attending our meeting and helping to organize the demonstration, commit a contingent to participate in the demonstration, and/or by making a donation of resources or financial assistance to the Alliance. The September 15 demonstration is being organized separately, but in consultation and solidarity with Indigenous groups — with the logistics of the action being decided in conjunction with Indigenous groups.

A second focus of the Alliance is to build other anti-Olympic related events in the lead up to September 15. This will provide an opportunity to coordinate with other groups and to publicize the September 15 actions, as well as highlight other social justice issues related to the Olympics. These include violation of civil liberties as a result of increased police and Olympic security powers which restrict freedom of movement and the right to protest, the prioritization of Olympic spending over on public housing, health and education.

For more information on how to become involved with the Alliance and/or to register your interest in attending the September 15 rally and march please reply by email to: kymba75@hotmail.com. You can also get on an Olympics discussion group join by sending an email to Olympic-link-subscribe@egroups.com. Please note: the 'Olympic-link egroup' is an information network for people who want to be informed of Olympic related events and as such is used by a wide variety of groups and individuals, including the Anti-Olympic Alliance. Remember that any protests will take place in the context of the tremendously enhanced police powers enacted in the run-up to the Sydney Olympics.

Check out these sites as well: Anti-Olympic Alliance: <http://www.cat.org.au/aoa>
Indigenous Protest 2000: <http://138.25.138.9/protest2000/>

New Sydney Olympics 2000 Police Powers and YOU

New Olympics related laws give incredibly wide powers to police and 'authorized officers' (potentially untrained and unqualified volunteers). These new powers and new offenses, created by law last November and reaffirmed in May 2000, are in addition to those powers police already have. Here is a quick run down of the laws, directed towards people who are involved in expression of dissent.

Here is a bit of background from the UTS Community Law and Legal Research Center. The Sydney Olympics will be a huge international event; it is a huge multinational industry, culminating in 2 weeks of sporting events. There will be loads of media; the BBC alone is bringing 4 jumbo jets of journalists and equipment. Security plans have been in place since before the bid by Sydney to the International Olympics Committee; in fact, one of the reasons why Sydney got dumped with the Olympics is that security prospects looked good. Australia does not have a history of terrorism or political violence. Yet Olympic security has cost the New South Wales police alone \$174 million. The security measures are international, with daily communication with major security agencies across the world, and have been a long time in the planning.

As far back as 1997, Victorian Deputy Police Commissioner Graham Sinclair admitted extensive surveillance of community groups — not just so-called 'extremist' groups, but also innocuous organizations, in a crackdown before the Sydney 2000 Olympics, "as extremists often shelter in moderate organizations." He made it clear that any groups that threatened public order or could be involved in politically motivated violence would warrant police attention. Although the N.S.W. Police did not admit to similar surveillance, this is certainly the case. For example, in 1999, the J18 demonstration organizing collective were subject to covert surveillance, and undercover police were sent to attend meetings at Emu cafe in Enmore.

Who will be policing the Olympics?

Security for Sydney 2000 is massive. Of 13,600 N.S.W. Police, at least 5000 will be deployed for the Olympics, 4500-4900 private security guards (this may balloon to 10,000-12,000 which is apparently a more realistic estimation), volunteers (numbers

public education, childcare and social welfare spending. Government priorities are for increasing profits to big business, increasing the divide between rich and poor.

There are 30,000 homeless people in the greater Sydney area per night, a number that will be exacerbated by the Olympics. Sydney has a 9-year waiting list for public housing.

It is estimated that there will be in excess of 50,000 police and security forces used at the Olympics, including over 30,000 security guards, 4000 Australian military (the same size of the Australian force sent to East Timor), as well as American and Israeli intelligence and security forces.

The N.S.W. government has passed laws making Sydney and N.S.W. an "Olympic police state" with these laws designed to curtail and stop legitimate protest and dissent. Under these new laws, "authorized officers" with little security training can use force to remove you, without giving a reason or producing identification (unless requested), can issue a \$200 on the spot fine and search your property and bags without reason.

unconfirmed), hundreds of Federal Police acting as 'close protection officers' for VIPs and diplomats, the Defense Force, and intelligence officers. N.S.W. Police are not allowed to take leave during the Olympics, training has been canceled, and court cases requiring police witnesses are to be held over for the duration of the Games. Despite this, numbers are apparently still tight, recent newspaper articles state that Chubb security, (who will be providing security for the Games) have been seeking new recruits through family and friends of existing security guards. They have also stated they will rehire retired workers and train up administrative staff! Some retired police will volunteer to work in country stations in non-operational roles during the games.

Overview of the Olympics laws

In the last few years heaps of legislation has been passed regulating behavior in public space, and giving police further powers to intervene in public space, some of which are permanent. They culminate in the Olympic (de)Arrangements Act, passed in April 2000. This Act allows the Minister to make an order to define areas other than Homebush Bay area to come under the special laws. Any other Olympic venues or adjacent areas — that is, pretty much all of Sydney — may come under these laws.

What do the Olympics laws do?

These laws create new offenses, and give police, 'authorized officers' (who may be volunteers), and 'rangers' new powers. Generally laws give police only powers to intervene in public space, but these laws give wide discretionary powers to people who have no training or qualifications.

In Olympic Sydney, it is against the law to protest! You are now REQUIRED to seek authorization for public assemblies. It is an offense to 'conduct or participate in any public assembly in a public area' if the assembly has not been authorized by the Sydney Harbor Foreshore Authority. If you get permission, it may be conditional. And 'free speech' activities are outlawed!

The Olympics laws make illegal many activities that may happen in a demonstration. In the areas covered, it is now against the law to use a loudspeaker or broadcasting equipment or to hand out leaflets or to display any kind of message unless it's directly on your clothes (such as a t-shirt) or your vehicle (such as a bumper sticker). In the Sydney Harbor Foreshore areas, on top of this, you cannot put up anything like a sign, climb any structures or trees, skate, or use facilities for sleeping overnight!

In 'sports-grounds,' officers do not even need to ask you to leave before using force to remove you, i.e. if you are annoying or inconvenient, officers may use force to remove you without asking you to leave, without giving you any reason why you should leave, and without a warning. Under the Act, any area in Sydney could be declared to be a 'sports-ground', even Town Hall Square. The Olympics laws also give the authorities the power to close off public spaces under their control. You may be refused entry if these areas if the Authority decides to limit the number of people in the area or if it has closed off a space.

For more info and help: Legal Aid Help line: 1800 806 913, TTY 1800 243 434

